

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A system, comprising:
an information center; and
a particular digital signal processing apparatus in
communication with information center over a communication
line, the digital signal processing apparatus
including~~comprising:~~
extracting means for extracting a particular
sound frame of music data from encoded digital data
recorded on an external storage medium that has been
loaded into said digital signal processing apparatus,
transmitting means for transmitting inquiry
information to an~~the~~ information center over a~~the~~ communication line, the inquiry information including
a~~the~~ extracted particular sound frame of music data
extracted from encoded digital data recorded on an
external storage medium that has been loaded into said
digital signal processing apparatus;
said information center including:
receiving means for receiving the inquiry
information transmitted from said digital signal
processing apparatus,
retrieving means for retrieving digital data
subject to the inquiry from the received inquiry
information, the retrieved digital data subject to the
inquiry including the extracted particular sound frame
of music data,
reference inquiry generating means for generating
reference inquiry information including a reference
sound frame of music data stored in the information
center that corresponds to the extracted particular
sound frame of music data and having a timing of a

start of encoding or recording that is consistent with that particular digital signal processing apparatus,
comparing means for comparing the extracted particular sound frame of music data included in the inquiry information and the reference sound frame of music data, the extracted particular sound frame of music data included in the inquiry information matching the reference sound frame of music data being an indication that the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium has the timing of the start of encoding or recording that is consistent with that particular digital signal processing apparatus and thereby is legally purchased data, the extracted particular sound frame of music data included in the inquiry information not matching the reference sound frame of music data being an indication that the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium has a timing of a start of encoding or recording that is not consistent with that particular digital signal processing apparatus,

inquiry result generating means for generating a result of the inquiry based on a result of the comparison carried out by said comparing means, and

transmitting means for transmitting the result of the inquiry to the digital signal processing apparatus over the communication line;

the digital signal processing apparatus including:

receiving means for receiving, from the information center over the communication line, a—the result of an—the inquiry,—that was conducted by the information center based on the transmitted inquiry information, the result of the inquiry indicating whether the extracted particular frame of music data

matches a corresponding frame of music data stored in the information center, the frame of music data stored in the information center being encoded or recorded in a manner consistent with the digital signal processing apparatus, the extracted particular frame of music data included in the inquiry information matching the frame of music data stored in the information center only when the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium was encoded or recorded in the manner consistent with the digital signal processing apparatus and not matching the frame of music data stored in the information center when the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium was encoded or recorded in a manner inconsistent with the digital signal processing apparatus;

discriminating means for judging, based on the received result of the inquiry, whether the encoded digital data recorded on said the storage medium was encoded or recorded in the manner consistent with the digital signal processing apparatus and thus is legally purchased data, and

controlling means for executing, in response to said discriminating means judging the encoded digital data to be legally purchased data, a process to offer an additional service to the customer,

the additional service offered to the customer by said controlling means including:

moving the encoded digital data from said storage medium to another storage medium,

restoring the encoded digital data onto said storage medium if the encoded digital data has been partially destroyed, and

converting the encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium into encoded digital data of a different bit rate before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

2. (cancelled)

3. (currently amended) The system digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by said controlling means converting said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium with an algorithm of a predetermined version into digital data having undergone encoding with an algorithm of a more advanced version, before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

4. - 5. (cancelled)

6. (currently amended) The system digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises furnishing said customer, free of charge, with a product related to a producing party who produces said digital data purchased legally by said customer from said information center.

7. (currently amended) The system digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising inputting means for inputting identification information for identifying said encoded digital data that are subject to said inquiry, wherein said identification information input through said inputting means is transmitted to said information center over said communication line.

8. (currently amended) The system digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said information center comprises receiving means for receiving said inquiry information and said identification information

transmitted from said digital signal processing apparatus, retrieving means for retrieving digital data subject to said inquiry from said received inquiry information, the retrieved digital data subject to the inquiry including the extracted particular frame of music data, reference inquiry information generating means for generating reference inquiry information corresponding to said retrieved digital data subject to the inquiry, the generated reference inquiry information including the stored frame of music data, comparing means for comparing the generated reference inquiry information and the retrieved digital data subject to the inquiry, inquiry result generating means for generating the result of the inquiry based on a result of the comparison by said comparing means, and means for transmitting the result of the inquiry to said digital processing apparatus.

9. (cancelled)

10. (currently amended) The system digital signal processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising charging means for processing charges; wherein, when said discriminating means judges that said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium are legally purchased data, said charging means charges one of nothing and a reduced amount on to said customer for said additional service offered to said customer.

11. (currently amended) A digital signal processing method, comprising:

loading an external storage medium into a particular digital signal processing apparatus;

extracting, at the digital signal processing apparatus, a particular sound frame of music data from the encoded digital data recorded on the loaded external storage medium;

transmitting identification information and inquiry information from the digital signal processing apparatus to an information center over a communication line, the identification information identifying encoded digital data recorded on the loaded storage medium, the inquiry information including a—the extracted particular sound frame of music data—extracted from the encoded digital data;

receiving, at the information center, the inquiry information transmitted from said digital signal processing apparatus;

retrieving, at the information center, digital data subject to the inquiry from the received inquiry information, the retrieved digital data subject to the inquiry including the extracted particular sound frame of music data;

generating, at the information center, reference inquiry information including a reference sound frame of music data stored in the information center that corresponds to the extracted particular sound frame of music data and which is encoded or recorded in a manner consistent with that particular digital signal processing apparatus;

comparing, at the information center, the extracted particular sound frame of music data included in the inquiry information and the reference sound frame of music data, the extracted particular sound frame of music data included in the inquiry information matching the reference sound frame of music data being an indication that the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium has the timing of the start of encoding or recording that is consistent with that particular digital signal processing apparatus and thereby is legally purchased data, the

extracted particular sound frame of music data included in the inquiry information not matching the reference sound frame of music data being an indication that the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium has a timing of a start of encoding or recording that is not consistent with that particular digital signal processing apparatus;

generating, at the information center, a result of the inquiry based on a result of the comparison carried out by said comparing means;

transmitting the result of the inquiry from the information center to the digital signal processing apparatus over the communication line;

receiving, at the digital signal processing apparatus from the information center, a—the result of an—the inquiry conducted by the information center based on the transmitted inquiry information, the result of the inquiry indicating whether the extracted particular frame of music data matches a corresponding frame of music data stored in the information center, the frame of music data stored in the information center being encoded or recorded in a manner consistent with the digital signal processing method, the extracted particular frame of music data included in the inquiry information matching the frame of music data stored in the information center only when the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium was encoded or recorded in the manner consistent with the digital signal processing method and not matching the frame of music data stored in the information center when the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium was encoded or recorded in a manner inconsistent with the digital signal processing method;

judging, at the digital signal processing apparatus, based on the received result of the inquiry, whether the

encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium was encoded or recorded in the manner consistent with the digital signal processing method and thus is legally purchased data; and

executing, at the digital signal processing apparatus, in response to the encoded digital data being judged to be legally purchased data, a process of offering an additional service to the customer,

the additional service offered to the customer including:

moving the encoded digital data from said storage medium to another storage medium,

restoring the encoded digital data onto said storage medium if the encoded digital data has been partially destroyed, and

converting the encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium into encoded digital data of a different bit rate before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

12. (cancelled)

13. (previously presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises converting said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium into encoded digital data encoded with an algorithm of a predetermined version, before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

14. - 15. (cancelled)

16. (previously presented) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises furnishing said customer, free of charge, with a product related to a producing party who

produced said digital data purchased legally by said customer from said information center.

17. (currently amended) The digital signal processing method according to claim 11, further comprising: ~~the step of inputting, said at the digital signal processing apparatus, the identification information for identifying said the encoded digital data to said inquiry, wherein said identification information input in said inputting step is transmitted to said information center over said communication line.~~

18. - 28. (cancelled)

29. (new) A system, comprising:

an information center; and

a particular digital signal processing apparatus in communication with information center over a communication line, the digital signal processing apparatus including:

extracting means for extracting a particular sound frame of music data from encoded digital data recorded on an external storage medium that has been loaded into said digital signal processing apparatus,

transmitting means for transmitting inquiry information to the information center over the communication line, the inquiry information including the extracted particular sound frame of music data; said information center including:

receiving means for receiving the inquiry information transmitted from said digital signal processing apparatus,

retrieving means for retrieving digital data subject to the inquiry from the received inquiry information, the retrieved digital data subject to the inquiry including the extracted particular sound frame of music data,

reference inquiry generating means for generating reference inquiry information including a reference sound frame of music data stored in the information center that corresponds to the extracted particular sound frame of music data and which is encoded or recorded in a manner consistent with that particular digital signal processing apparatus, and

transmitting means for transmitting the reference inquiry information to the digital signal processing apparatus over the communication line;

the digital signal processing apparatus including:

receiving means for receiving, from the information center over the communication line, the transmitted reference inquiry information,

comparing means for comparing the extracted particular sound frame of music data and the reference sound frame of music data, the extracted particular sound frame of music data matching the reference sound frame of music data being an indication that the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium has the timing of the start of encoding or recording that is consistent with that particular digital signal processing apparatus and thereby is legally purchased data, the extracted particular sound frame of music data not matching the reference sound frame of music data being an indication that the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium has a timing of a start of encoding or recording that is not consistent with that particular digital signal processing apparatus,

discriminating means for judging, based on the result of the comparison carried out by said comparing means, whether the encoded digital data recorded on the storage medium was legally purchased data, and

controlling means for executing, in response to said discriminating means judging the encoded digital data to be legally purchased data, a process to offer an additional service to the customer,

the additional service offered to the customer by said controlling means including:

moving the encoded digital data from said storage medium to another storage medium,

restoring the encoded digital data onto said storage medium if the encoded digital data has been partially destroyed, and

converting the encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium into encoded digital data of a different bit rate before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

30. (new) The system according to claim 29, wherein said additional service is offered to said customer by said controlling means converting said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium with an algorithm of a predetermined version into digital data having undergone encoding with an algorithm of a more advanced version, before replacing unconverted digital data with converted digital data on said storage medium.

31. (new) The system according to claim 29, wherein said additional service offered to said customer comprises furnishing said customer, free of charge, with a product related to a producing party who produces said digital data purchased legally by said customer from said information center.

32. (new) The system according to claim 29, further comprising inputting means for inputting identification information for identifying said encoded digital data that are subject to said inquiry, wherein said identification information

input through said inputting means is transmitted to said information center over said communication line.

33. (new) The system according to claim 29, further comprising charging means for processing charges; wherein when said discriminating means judges that said encoded digital data recorded on said storage medium are legally purchased data, said charging means charges one of nothing and a reduced amount on to said customer for said additional service offered to said customer.